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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000457

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SUBJECT: RCD-GOMA DEBATES CONTINUE

REF: KINSHASA 0424

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) A delegation of CIAT Ambassadors, including UN SRSG Swing and the European Commission, Canadian, British, and American Chiefs of Mission, met with Vice President Ruberwa Thursday evening for about an hour and a half to discuss the ongoing debate about RCD-Goma's status and continuing participation in the Transition Government and election process. Ruberwa was accompanied by Chief of Staff Emungu, and three other RCD-Goma members, the latter all sharing relatively hard-line views. The CIAT Ambassadors ran through arguments very similar to those presented by the American Ambassador on Monday (per reftel), essentially that RCD-Goma interests, those of their followers, and indeed those of the Congolese people generally would be much better served by continuing RCD-Goma engagement in this final phase of the Congolese Transition and elections.

12. (C) Ruberwa ran through a by-now familiar litany of complaints. In essence, Ruberwa and his colleagues argued that the issue of territorial status for Minembwe (essentially the central area of South Kivu's Banyamulenge base) and the related question of assured representation in the future national assembly served as a proximate symbol of bad faith shown by Congolese political leaders generally, and specifically by President Kabila and his advisors. Ruberwa at one point presented an emotional argument that the Tutsi people had long suffered as a persecuted minority in Zaire/DRC. If there could not be some compromise on this question now, how could there be any faith that a future government likely headed by an elected, and thus politically stronger, President Kabila be trusted to undertake any further progress? Indeed, it seemed to Ruberwa that movement backwards would be more likely. Ruberwa did end the evening, however, by promising to take account of what he called the clear "consensus" view presented by the assembled mbassadors of the need to stay engaged. Ruberwa reported that another meeting of the RCD-Goma founders' group is scheduled for Friday afternoon, March 17 to discuss the issue further.

13. (C) South African President Mbeki had been in town for a two-day visit and met at least twice with Ruberwa as well as President Kabila. According to Ruberwa, Mbeki had sought to arrange a joint Mbeki/Kabila/Ruberwa meeting, but had been unable to do so. It was unclear what Mbeki had managed to obtain during his visit. Ruberwa did say he understood that Kabila was willing to call for a meeting of the Espace Presidentiel (President Kabila plus the four DRC Vice Presidents) on Monday, March 20 with Minembwe on the agenda, but Ruberwa asserted that a Monday meeting would be too late to permit the RCD-Goma to discuss any possible deal coming out of the meeting and still prepare comprehensive lists of

candidates in accordance with the Electoral Commission's candidate registration deadlines. The CIAT Chiefs of Mission noted in the discussion that other senior-level leaders expected to arrive imminently in the DRC include European Union foreign policy chief Solana, scheduled to arrive Sunday, March 19, and UN SYG Kofi Annan with a planned arrival on Tuesday, March 21.

14. (C) Comment: At this point, it is clear that Minembwe representation and potential territorial status has become an emotional issue for Ruberwa, tied up with long-standing discrimination against Congolese Tutsis and an entrenched sense of victimization. It is also clear that any sense of trust between Ruberwa and Kabila and at least many of their close advisors has all but completely broken down. While many of Ruberwa's complaints have a justified basis, he is nevertheless dealing from a weak hand, and he is reluctant to acknowledge that withdrawal from the process would only make it weaker still. Should he attempt to insist on withdrawal, further splintering of RCD-Goma is likely. The RCD-Goma Vice President, North Kivu Governor Serufuli, appears strongly committed to participating in elections; others within the party such as Defense Minister Onusumba are ready to move to try to seize control of what might be left of the national party apparatus and are also committed to participation. There are Minembwe representation proposals on the table, as previously reported, that could form the basis of a deal at least minimally acceptable to Ruberwa and the Presidency. It is even conceivable that the basic deal has been reached privately, but Ruberwa is keeping it in his pocket to try to wrest further concessions, or for tactical reasons prior to the RCD-Goma Friday meeting. Nothing, however, is particularly clear. We will follow up during the course of

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the day with Presidency officials as well as try to get a better take on the current status of talks. End comment.
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